

CFP: Alternative Pathways

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Conference

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June 13, 2019

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China

Subject Fields:

Anthropology, Business History / Studies, Contemporary History, Geography, Social History / Studies

CFP: Alternative Pathways

Applications are invited for a workshop on 9/10 November 2019, at the Center for the History of Global Development, College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University.

The global challenges of the twenty-first century are unprecedented, both in scale and in kind. Climate change, the crossing of crucial planet boundaries, dramatically rising amounts of (plastic) waste, to name but a few, are well known and their discussions well-rehearsed. In very simple terms, the many challenges seem to be related to the interaction between economic, environmental and health-related aspects of development.

An important social function of research into these areas is to raise awareness about these threats and to ring the alarm in order to put pressure onto stake-holders to take active steps in these fields. However, there is the danger that these repeated warnings of existential threats and unrelenting deterioration has an unintended, paralyzing effect, feeding a narrative of hopeless doom. What may also be needed for fruitful debates about necessary changes are powerful counter narratives designed to encourage action. These narratives must not be naïve or soothing, but they should provide realistic and critical views onto existing concepts and experiences pointing towards alternative pathways into the future. This workshop seeks to collect information for such narratives. It is based on the assumptions that finding solutions for the challenges facing local and global societies will require many different approaches, including ideas that may appear outlandish or unrealistic today, but that may turn out to open windows into new, potentially fruitful developments.

The last decades have seen a number of initiatives in different parts of the world, small and not so small, that test alternative developmental roads. Sometimes, these alternatives address very targeted, technical questions, sometimes they take more comprehensive, far-reaching approaches. They address very different challenges, but all break with existing conventions and assumptions regarding economic, environmental, social and/or political arrangements. Some have already received a fair amount of research attention; others are still very new.

Examples may include but are not limited to:

1. Local currencies
2. Transition towns
3. Rainwater harvesting
4. Permaculture
5. Fog collection
6. Food waste collection
7. Urban farming
8. Open source pharmaceutical research and production
9. ...

Contributions are invited on these and other topics that offer constructive but critical assessments of conceptualizations of and/or experiences with projects pointing towards alternative pathways and their potentials, benefits, risks and limitations. The workshop is also meant to provide a platform for considerations regarding opportunities for a network of scholars working in this field.

Please submit a 200 word abstract and a one-page CV to Iris Borowy borowyiris@i.shu.edu.cn by 13 June, 2019. We will select a group of participants shortly afterwards. The sponsors will cover all local expenses, including lodging and meals. Some travel assistance will also be available for some participants.

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